

## PLAN IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE AND PUBLIC SCOPING

### PLAN IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

The UMRRFMP, 2020-2029 will be evaluated annually according to the following schedule:

Table 3. 2020-2029 Upper Missouri River Reservoir Management Plan Implementation Process

Schedule	
Action	Dates
Draft Management Plan Public Comment	October-November, 2019
Final Management Plan (FWP Commission tentative and final approval)	December 2019 (pending approval)
Adopt new fishing regulations	Annually, if necessary, as outlined by management plan goals.
Monitor Fisheries	On-going, annually
Prepare Annual Report	Fall, annually
Appoint Advisory Committee	Winter, annually
Report Annual Trends to Advisory Committee	Winter, annually
Public Meetings	Late winter or early spring, annually
Review/Revise Management Plan	Annually, if necessary
Propose Changes to Fishing Regulations	Regulation review cycle; Annually, if necessary

### PUBLIC SCOPING

#### Winter 2018/2019

#### Public Scoping and On-line Survey

Public scoping for management plan revisions began in December 2018, when FWP hosted three open houses in Central Montana (Helena, Bozeman, and Great Falls) to better address potential management strategy alternatives when revision the 2010-2019 management plan. Approximately 150 members of the public attended the meeting, and some provided public comment. After extensive public scoping FWP developed and launched a 20-question on-line survey, open to the public from December 5<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup>, 2018, to gather public input on fisheries management strategies found within the Upper Missouri River Reservoirs Fisheries Management Plan, 2010-2019. The survey elicited 1,197 respondents and generated over 4,000 question-specific public comments. Results from the survey were disseminated to the public in Helena on February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019 and were available electronically as requested. Additional public comment was gathered at each open house or meeting.

Results from the survey can be found at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-5TD7NBG9V/>

### **Spring 2019**

#### **Citizen Workgroup**

Public scoping efforts in 2018 and 2019 helped FWP develop areas within the 2010-2019 management plan to begin recommending management alternatives to be included in this document. In the spring of 2019, FWP convened a Citizens Workgroup to focus on developing management alternative for five specific areas within the scope of the 2010-2019 management plan. Below are the Work Group Charter and recommended alternatives. Workgroup recommended alternatives were presented to the public at three open houses throughout Central Montana (Helena, Bozeman, and Great Falls) in July 2019. Approximately 25 members of the public attended the open houses, and some provided public comment.

#### **Charter for the Upper Missouri River Reservoir Fisheries Management Plan**

The upper Missouri River reservoirs and associated river fisheries are some of the most heavily fished waters in Montana accounting for roughly 10 percent of the total annual statewide angling pressure. Because of the system's proximity to Bozeman, Great Falls, Butte, Missoula and Helena, recreational use of the reservoirs will continue to grow as the fisheries become even more integral to the quality of life for those who live and recreate in Lewis and Clark and Broadwater counties.

The current fisheries management plan (Upper Missouri River Reservoir Fisheries Management Plan 2010-2019) supports a common goal to “provide a cost-effective, balanced multi-species fisheries by applying adaptive management strategies.” The current plan expires December 31, 2019. Therefore, it is the goal of our current management planning process to have a new fisheries management plan in place by the end of December 2019.

#### **Interests Represented on the Citizen Workgroup**

- Unaffiliated warmwater anglers – Dale Gilbert
- Unaffiliated coldwater anglers – Pete Cardinal (A)
- Organized warmwater-angler groups – Jim Gillespie, Lance Kresge
- Organized coldwater-angler groups – Will Trimbath
- Ice-fishing anglers – Pete Cardinal (B)
- Conservation groups – Mark Traxler
- Kids' fishing – All Representative
- Fishing-tournament organizer – Dale Gilbert
- Outfitter – Mike Agee, Shalon Hastings, Josh Stienmetz

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- Local government – Dustin Ramoie, Doug Breker
- Local business – Bart Bratlien
- Other interests – Eric Roberts, Richard Stuker

### Role of the Workgroup

The Workgroup will:

- develop upper Missouri River reservoir system fisheries management recommendations around specific identified issues for consideration by FWP.
- Specific identified issues:
  - Plan duration
  - Plan responsiveness
  - Yellow perch management (Holter Reservoir)
  - Rainbow trout stocking and management (all plan sections)
  - Walleye management (all plan sections)
- provide information and input needed for FWP to make informed decisions about recommendations.
- forward recommendations to FWP for incorporation into the management plan process and attend public open-house meetings to help explain and engage in discussions with attendees about the Workgroup recommendations and management alternatives.

### Responsibilities of the Workgroup Members

The Workgroup:

- is a cooperative effort, with all members participating in formulating the recommendations.
- is encouraged to reach general agreement/consensus related to recommendations.
- members acknowledge the value of each advisors' comments and viewpoint and will create discussion ground rules to encourage a climate of respect.
- members agree to bring information into the process and likewise, to communicate to constituents about the process as it goes forward.
- functions in an advisory capacity aligned with state laws and policies and does not have decision-making authority.

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- members will be required to attend every meeting; substitutes or proxies will not be allowed.

### Responsibilities of the Resource Specialist Group

- The Resource Specialist Group will provide biological, social and hydrological information on all aspects of the upper Missouri River reservoir system fisheries; biologists will bring in other technical representatives to add information to the process when needed.
- FWP fisheries biologists and managers will provide fisheries management expertise, background on past management and management constraints.
- FWP plan coordinators will ensure that the process is timely and effective. FWP plan coordinators will:
  - serve as general information source;
  - serve as workgroup members regarding any special needs or requests;
  - organize meetings and provide written meeting summaries in cooperation with facilitator;
  - organize guest speakers or topic specific experts to present information to the workgroup;
  - suggest language related to the recommendations when requested by the Workgroup;
  - manage review of the draft plan;
  - compile the final draft plan;
  - coordinate the public involvement process after the draft is released to the general public.

### Meetings and Timeline

- All day meetings will be held April 23, May 16 and if necessary, May 29. FWP will schedule the location and time of the meetings. FWP will provide mileage and per diem at state rates for workgroup members as well as provide lunch within which public comments will be taken.
- Role of the Facilitator

An outside facilitator will:

- conduct the meetings in a positive and inclusive manner.
- help develop agreement among workgroup members on ground rules for member conduct and meeting operation.

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- help the workgroup address items on each meeting agenda in a timely fashion.
- ensure participation by advisors is equitable and courteous.
- assist in producing a written summary of the major points for each meeting.
- help the workgroup develop consensus recommendations around identified issues.

The process will result recommendations presented to FWP in June 2019.

Workgroup recommendations were disseminated to the public at three open houses in Central Montana in July 2019. Additional public comments were gathered at each open house location.

### Workgroup Recommendations (Final Meeting)

#### **UPPER MISSOURI RIVER RESERVOIRS FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PLAN CITIZENS WORKGROUP**

Convened in 2019 by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
May 2019

### **Final Alternatives and Recommendations**

After full discussion including assuring that the “Important Questions” were answered; the Guiding Principles were honored; and the “interests” were considered to the best degree possible, the Workgroup agreed to forward the following consensus alternatives and recommendations to the Department:

#### **Plan Duration/Plan Responsiveness**

##### All Plan Sections:

##### *Alternatives*

- Create a 10 to 15 year plan with annual updates based on meetings with a Citizen Advisory Group.
- Set goals to replace triggers in the current plan.
- In general, give priority consideration to analysis of trend data of biological and scientific data from annual gill netting.
- Generally, consider 2 to 3 years of data; however, the Department reserves the option of looking at annual changes based on significant events or if there is a data point significantly outside the normal range of the goal.

##### *Recommendations*

The Workgroup agrees that all alternatives can go forward as acceptable.

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### **“Important Questions”**

- What is the financial constraint that FWP faces with consideration to changing plans?
- How many years is more ideal than 10 years?
- Can a good decision be made with data from 2 consecutive years?
- What is the appropriate balance between professional trust and triggers?
- What needs to happen in the Plan so adaptive management can occur when needed?

### **Overall Interests**

- It's in everyone's interest to have a good fishery.
- It's FWP's interest to have a Plan that will help them be effective managers and help them do their job.
- It's in the interest of the Commission to have a professional Plan that results in a good fishery and that is satisfactory to the public.

### **“Guiding Principles”**

- We believe that an adaptive management plan is critical to good management.
- We believe that responsiveness should be driven by science and biology (based on a 3 year average unless rapid changes dictate a more immediate response).
- We believe that we can learn from other similar water management plans in terms of duration and responsiveness approaches, experiences, and results.
- We believe that the Workgroup needs to be supportive of FWP personnel in making adaptive changes based on data.)

## **Rainbow trout stocking and management**

### All Plan sections

#### *Alternatives*

- Set a goal of 4 to 6 to net with leeway for FWP to apply numbers per waterway.
- Stay the current management course: Return historic stocking levels to pre-2017; continue population monitoring through gillnet surveys; maintain the 5 fish limit.
- Collaborate with State and federal agencies and private entities on habitat enhancement projects UMR watershed including education.

#### *Recommendations*

The Workgroup agrees that all alternatives can go forward as acceptable.

### **“Important Questions”**

- What needs to be done to bring about adequate stocking of rainbow trout in the reservoir system?  
Are there reasonable strategies other than stocking?
- How can habitat be enhanced?
- How can funding for stocking be sustained?

### **Overall Interests**

- It's in the interest of anglers to be able to catch rainbow trout because they are the easiest year-round fish to catch and there is minimal cost to gear.

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- It's in the interest of anglers and the local communities to have a quality rainbow trout fishery for fishing opportunities and for the economy.

### **"Guiding Principles"**

- We believe that netting surveys should be used to monitor all waters.
- We believe trout goals are needed to provide a baseline or to identify needed action.

## **Yellow perch Management**

### Canyon Ferry Reservoir:

#### *Alternatives*

- Set 8 to 12 goal for incentive for population improvement.
- Maintain the current 10 fish limit; determine how perch harvest affects the perch population at Canyon Ferry and adjust limits accordingly; consider raising the limit if trending up from 10/net.
- Enhance habitat with partners' dollars.
- Use ponds for forage enhancement.
- Provide education to the public on voluntary conservation.
- Explore live bait use in the winter.

### Hauser Reservoir:

#### *Alternative and agreed upon Recommendation*

- Set goal at 6 to 8 per net

### Holter Reservoir:

#### *Alternatives*

- Set a goal of 8 to 12 per net.
- If harvest does not impact perch number in Holter:
  - Trending below 8 per net, 25 per day limit
  - Trending above 10 per net, 50 per day limit
  - Possession – 2 daily limits
- Provide education to the public on voluntary conservation.

### All Plan sections:

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### *Alternatives*

- Adjust possible bag/limits based on yellow perch goal.
- Improve public outreach to expand awareness of the Management Plan, rationale for the Plan and its parts, and management regulations and actions (e.g., signs, social media, tournaments, boat shows, traditional media, angler groups, etc.).
- Recognize anglers' preferred size of Walleye – 14 to 18 inches.
  - Missouri River population: Use catch and release as a tool; explore management options for the River; do monitoring to maintain data on the River; use creel surveys and recreation surveys and evaluate.
  - Manage for preferred fish size of 14 to 18 inches.

### *Recommendations*

The Workgroup agrees that all alternatives can go forward as acceptable.

#### **“Important Questions”**

- When should FWP act and based on what?
- How much or how little should FWP act?
- How do we increase the number of perch?
- How does the River impact the fishery on the Lake?
- How can Perch habitat be improved?
- Based on the current condition of the Perch fishery, should the Perch tournament continue?

#### **Overall “Interests”**

- It's in the interest of families, kids, all anglers - to be able to catch perch.
- It's in the interest of ice anglers to be able to expect to catch perch.
- It's in the interest of the local area to maintain the economic benefits gained from anglers who fish for perch nearly year-round.
- It's in the interest of the fisheries, its users and managers to maintain populations of Perch to support its role as a primary forage base for the Reservoirs and as an important sport fish.

#### **“Guiding Principles”**

- We believe perch are the “foundation”/keystone of the health of the reservoir system. We believe that with a healthy perch population the rest of the ecosystem can thrive.)

### **Walleye management**

#### Canyon Ferry Reservoir:

### *Alternatives*

- Canyon Ferry population (separation between yellow perch and walleye):



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- Set goal at 5 to 7 net based on the net survey and PSD 30-60 (exception if yellow perch not reaching the goal range, up regulations as a tool.)
- Manage for preferred size of 14 to 18 inches.
- Set slot limits based on abundance and PSD goals to inform the slot.
- Use 3-inch net to set trophy limits; consider doing away with the 3-inch net because of number of large fish lost to the date collection.

### Holter Reservoir:

#### *Alternatives*

- Holter population:
  - Set goal at 4 to 6 and PSD 30-60.
  - Adjust bag/possible limits based on the yellow perch goal.
  - Use abundance and PSD for bag limits; consider adjusting the slot limit and reducing the bag limit.

### All Reservoir Sections:

#### *Alternatives*

- Explore opportunities for forage enhancement.
  - Partner with other organizations/agencies to artificially enhance forage.
  - Explore use of a snow fence, plastic – place and remove; pilot project.
  - Explore minnow enhancement (fatheads)

#### *Recommendations*

The Workgroup agrees that all alternatives can go forward as acceptable.

#### **“Important Questions”**

- What can be done to improve sucker as forage?
- What might improve more permanent perch forage? Can we try to do something with ponds? Is it possible to increase or enhance the forage base?
- Would enhancing perch habitat improve the forage base?
- How can we proactively manage harvest in a timely manner to maintain the relationship between walleye and forage?
- How do we improve angler education to increase the effectiveness of harvest as a management tool?
- What size Walleye do anglers prefer to harvest?
- How do we increase the population of walleyes within the preferred harvest size class?

#### **Overall “interests”**

- It's in the interest of the Helena area to have the positive economic impact of walleye angling be understood and valued (i.e., tackle, boats, fuel, lodging, shopping, tournaments, and more).

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- It's in the interest of adults, children, families, etc. to have a variety of fishing opportunities and experiences.
- It's in the interest of some anglers to be able to participate in competitive experiences (walleye tournaments). It's in the interest of tournament organizers to be able to do positive marketing and have some financial gain.
- It's in the interest of some dedicated walleye anglers to have opportunities to catch trophy fish.

### **Guiding Principles"**

- We believe that a healthy walleye fishery means sustainable, quality fish with a diverse age structure.
- We believe that the fishery should provide maximum opportunity to all possible anglers to experience walleye fishing.)

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